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AUTHOR(S):

Takahashi, Kei

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The Tariqa's Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

A New Logic in the Sufi Organization: The Continuation and the Disintegration of the *Tarīqas* in Modern Egypt¹⁾

TAKAHASHI Kei*

Abstract

The present article examines the logic behind “succession” to the leadership (*mashyakha*) within the *tarīqas*, and some factors involved in their disintegration in early 20th century Egypt.

Throughout the history, the question of succession to *mashyakha* has been a frequent cause of conflict among the members of *tarīqas*, which at times led to their divisions. Until the beginning of the 19th century, however, the word “*tarīqa*” did not necessarily refer to an organization but literally to the “Sufi Way,” which is a specific method of devotion. Actually, each *tarīqa* consisted of a number of small groups or families headed by their own leaders (*shaykhs*); this implied that a *tarīqa* did not have to be a single unified organization.

Through the institutionalization of the Egyptian *tarīqas* initiated by the state in the 19th century, a new logic in the Sufi organization was introduced, whereby each *tarīqa* had to be an organization headed by a single *shaykh*. This logic created a situation which encouraged leaders of those subgroups/families within a given *tarīqa*, who were now ranked as deputies (*khalīfas*), to claim that they were *shaykhs* of the independent *tarīqas*.

In 1905, this new logic was stipulated in the regulations, which must have aimed at the stability and the continuity of the existing *tarīqas*. However, this could not stop the recurrence of the divisions. Rather, a number of *khalīfas* started to claim independence from their *shaykhs*.

By analysing a case of how al-Ḥabībiyya gained independence from al-Rifāʿiyya, one factor responsible for the increase in the disintegration of the *tarīqas* can be pointed out: the new logic in the Sufi organization itself provided grounds for justifying the claims of those *khalīfas* who wanted to be *shaykhs* of their own *tarīqas*. In other words, the state's very endeavor to stabilize the *tarīqas* served on the contrary to create instability.

* 高橋 圭, Research Fellow, NIHU Center for Area Studies/Visiting Fellow, Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University

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1. Introduction

While the issue of “succession” among the Sufis is generally discussed as a matter of their genealogy (*silsila*), this paper approaches the issue from the point of view of their organizational aspects—generally recognized as “*ṭarīqa*.”

Throughout history, the question of succession to the leadership (*mashyakha*) has been a frequent cause of conflict among the *ṭarīqas*, which at times led to their divisions. In many instances, these conflicts were brought about by some ambitious deputies (*khalīfas*) who claimed that they were not *khalīfas* but leaders (*shaykhs*) of their own *ṭarīqas*.

In Egypt, under the centralizing policy of Muḥammad ‘Alī (who reigned through 1805-48) and his successors, which finally crystallized into a nation state, the institutionalization of the *ṭarīqas* was initiated; the Egyptian *ṭarīqas* were placed under the supervision of a unitary authority—initially, the *Shaykh al-Bakrī*, and subsequently, the Sufi Council (*majlis al-ṣūfī*)—and each group was transformed into a more rigid organization [De Jong 1978]. Although it reflected the rulers’ rather simple interest, i.e., control and taxation, the noteworthy aspect of this institutionalization was that the rulers were fully aware of the fact that in order to control the *ṭarīqas* effectively, they needed to be well organized and stabilized in the society. Consequently, the primary function expected of the institution for the *ṭarīqas* was to act as a mediator in the conflicts within the *ṭarīqas* in order to prevent the recurrence of divisions.

However, this could not bring an end to the divisions within the *ṭarīqas*; instead, we observe an increase in these divisions and an explosion of the emergent *ṭarīqas* in the nineteenth century.

From 1895 to 1905, the state intensified its control over the *ṭarīqas* by issuing regulations (*lā’ihāt*) stipulating various aspects such as the status of *shaykhs* and *khalīfas*, the relationship between them, and the conditions for their appointment. The regulations must have aimed to define the *ṭarīqas* as more systematized organizations; *ṭarīqas* should be “modernized” in order to stabilize them within the Egyptian society. However, these regulations, too, were unsuccessful in bringing an end to the recurrence of divisions. In fact, immediately after these regulations were issued, a number of *khalīfas* requested the government to appoint them as *shaykhs* of their own *ṭarīqas*.

Therefore, the following question arises: Why did the divisions within the *ṭarīqas* increase despite the state’s endeavor to stabilize the *ṭarīqa* organizations? More specifically, how could the *khalīfa* justify his claim of independence when his *ṭarīqa* had become a rigid organization in this period?

In my opinion, some new factors are involved in the logic of the Sufi organization that was

introduced by the very institutionalization itself.

Based on this hypothesis, I will begin my discussion by examining the manner in which this “new logic in the Sufi organization” was introduced and established within the Egyptian *ṭarīqas*; I will then proceed to answer the aforementioned question by analyzing the case of *ṭarīqa* al-Ḥabībīyya, which attained its independence from *ṭarīqa* al-Rifāʿīyya in 1925 following a serious conflict.

2. *Ṭarīqas* before 1812

With regard to institutionalization, the evolution of the Sufi organization in modern Egypt can be divided into three phases. The first phase is the period before 1812, when there were no official institutions for the *ṭarīqas* in Egypt. The second phase is from 1812 to 1895, when the institution for the *ṭarīqas* was introduced in Egypt. The last phase is from 1895 to the present when institutions for the *ṭarīqas* were reorganized and incorporated into the state’s administration.

2.1 *Ṭarīqas* and “Sufi Orders”

It is a well-known fact that *ṭarīqas* in the Arab world throughout history have not been monolith organizations but have comprised small individual groups. In Ottoman Egypt too, most *ṭarīqas* consisted of a number of small groups headed by their own *shaykhs*; this implied that a *ṭarīqa* did not have to be a single unified organization [Winter 1992: 128-166].

A close analysis of the chronicles and biographies written at the beginning of the nineteenth century reveals the more important fact that during these days—and probably, even before then—these small groups within the *ṭarīqas* were not necessarily regarded by their contemporaries as branches of their mother *ṭarīqa* or as sub-*ṭarīqas*. Indeed, the word “*ṭarīqa*” did not represent the Sufi organization at all; rather, literally, it referred to the “Sufi Way,” which is a specific method of devotion: rituals (*ḥizb*, *wird*) and genealogy (*silsila*).

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1756-1825), a well-known historian of the late Ottoman Egypt, counted in his chronicle numerous Ulamas—and several Mamluks and Ottomans—who were initiated into *ṭarīqas* [Jabartī 1879-1880a: 297-299, 1879-1880b: 2, 59, 147-148]. He himself was initiated into al-Khalwatiyya.²⁾

The descriptions of these intellectual Sufis almost entirely focused on their good characters (*ādāb* and *akhlāq*), their learning (*ʿilm* and *maʿarifa*), and their genealogies (*isnād* and *silsila*); however, apart from the description of their participation in the *dhikr* sessions, there is scant material on their activities as members of the *ṭarīqa* or its organizational aspects. It appears that al-Jabartī

2) He was a disciple of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (1715-1781) [Jabartī 1879-1880b: 61-68].

was more interested in the question of who succeeded to the *ṭarīqa* than what groups they formed or the kind of activities they practiced.

On the other hand, in his references to the collective activities of popular Sufis, al-Jabartī never referred to these groups as “*ṭarīqas*.” Here, I would like to quote two passages from his chronology, both of which clearly reflect al-Jabartī’s view on the Sufi groups.

The first quotation is a description of a saint’s birthday (*mawlid*), in which Sufis gathered and performed their rituals.

He (a French captain) was afflicted with syphilis, and he made a vow to hold this celebration. When he recovered slightly, he began to light some lamps and candles in the mosque and the shrine. Then, he paid the jurists to recite the Qur’ān in the daytime for studying and asked others to recite *Dalā’il al-Khayyriyyāt* of al-Jāzūlī at night in the mosque. Then, the situation continued to grow in scale and the people of innovations (*bida’*)—such as groups (*jamā’a*) of al-‘Afīfī, al-Sammān, al-‘Arabī, and al-‘Īsawiyya—joined to them. Among them were those who gathered in a circle and performed mock recitations of *al-Jalāla*, and chanters sang *qaṣīdas* and popular love songs. Among them were those who recited verses from *Burda al-Madīḥ* of al-Būṣīrī [Jabartī 1879-1880c: 39].

Presently, al-‘Afīfiyya, al-‘Arabiyya, and al-‘Īsawiyya are recognized as sub-*ṭarīqas* (*furū’*) of al-Shādhiliyya, and al-Sammāniyya as a sub-*ṭarīqa* of al-Khalwatiyya. However, al-Jabartī did not regard them as *ṭarīqas* at all, and instead, referred to them as “*jamā’a*.” As will be mentioned in the next chapter, these groups came to be recognized as *ṭarīqas* in the nineteenth century.

The second quotation relates the activities of Sufis in the *kiswa* procession; in 1810. When a certain ‘Uthmān Agha restored the Zayn al-‘Ābidīn shrine, he sent for the Sufis in order to transport the *kiswa* to cover the tomb inside.

Then, he sent for the people of Satanic *ṭarīqas* (*ahl al-turuq al-shayṭāniyya*) known as Sufi banner bearers (*al-ashāyir*). They are market men (*sūqa*) and holders of mean occupations (*arbāb al-ḥiraf al-mardhūl*) who attach themselves to the masters of famous shrines such as al-Aḥmadiyya, al-Rif’āiyya, al-Qādiriyya, al-Burhāmiyya, and so on [Jabartī 1879-1880d: 120].

In the above quotation, while referring to them as the people of Satanic “*ṭarīqas*,” al-Jabartī never regarded them as members of any established *ṭarīqas* such as al-Aḥmadiyya, al-Rif’āiyya, al-

Qādiriyya, and al-Burhāmiyya, but as rabble who tried to relate themselves to the founders of these *ṭarīqas*.

Both passages make it evident that al-Jabartī never conflated the members of the honorable *ṭarīqas* with the groups of popular Sufis even if the latter associated themselves with these *ṭarīqas*; he clearly distinguished the Sufi Way (*ṭarīqa*) from the Sufi group (*jamā'a*).³⁾

This view was also shared by contemporary Sufis. For example, Aḥmad al-Sāwī (1761-1825) is known as the founder of al-Sāwiyya, which is presently a sub-*ṭarīqa* of al-Khalwatiyya. However, the word “*ṭarīqa al-Sāwiyya*” cannot be found in his biography written by his direct disciples. He was recognized as one of the many *shaykhs* of al-Khalwatiyya, and his group was literally known as “*jamā'a al-Sāwī*” or “*jamā'a al-ustādh*” [Maghribī *et al.* 1928: 50, 58, 60, 69, 78].⁴⁾

2.2 *Shaykhs' Authority*

Although “*ṭarīqa*” was a name given not to specify the organization but the teaching, it is clear from the description of the contemporaries quoted above that Sufis gathered and formed groups (*jamā'a*) bearing the names of the specific *ṭarīqas*. Indeed, even the intellectual Sufis formed certain groups, or a kind of salon (*majlis*), where they performed *dhikr* under their *shaykhs* [Maghribī *et al.* 1928: 34, 37].

These groups, however, could hardly be called “organizations” in the modern sense of the word: typically, they consisted of guides (*shaykhs/murshids*), their direct disciples (*murīds*), and lay members (*muḥibbs*) who for the most part were attracted by the *shaykhs'* personality, charisma, or blessings. In most cases, these groups maintained their unity by the face-to-face relationship between the *shaykhs* and the other members; therefore, when the *shaykhs* passed away, these groups would easily dissolve.

Indeed, there were *shaykhs* in some *ṭarīqas* who appeared to represent the *ṭarīqas* symbolically; in many cases, however, they were the heads of the saint-families rather than the actual leaders of Sufi groups. The core of al-Aḥmadiyya, al-Qādiriyya, al-Rifā'iyya, and al-Burhāmiyya—generally known as the four principle *ṭarīqas* in Egypt—were in fact collectives of saint-families, and the

3) There were exceptions, of course; it is probable that al-Sa'diyya and al-ʿIsawiyya were considered as both *ṭarīqa* and *jamā'a*, known to practice peculiar rituals [Jabartī 1879-1880c: 39-40; Jabartī 1879-1880d: 190].

4) It is probable that the same view was shared even by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 1565/66), one of the most famous Sufis in medieval Egypt. According to Michael Winter, al-Shaʿrānī, himself initiated into al-Aḥmadiyya, blamed other members of the *ṭarīqa*. Winter explains this incoherence as follows; “The explanation for this seemingly paradox lies in Shaʿrānī’s concept of Sufism and in the nature of the Aḥmadiyya which was not a compact *ṭāʾifa*, like the Shādhiliyya, but a widespread and rather vague movement which expressed itself on different social levels For Shaʿrānī the main thing in any Sufi relationship did not necessarily mean belonging to a certain order, or even practicing a saint cult.” [Winter 1982: 99-101].

mashyakha of the *ṭarīqas* was inherited by the heads of the most important family among them. However, these *shaykhs*' actual authority over the other members was very limited [De Jong 1978: 14-19; Winter 1992: 133-138]. In al-Aḥmadiyya, for example, which consisted of 13 families (*bayt*, pl. *buyūt*), the heads of the al-Marzūqī family inherited the title of its *mashyakha* from the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, their authority over the members of al-Aḥmadiyya was limited to Cairo and the neighboring areas, and the right to supervise the shrine of Aḥmad al-Badawī in Ṭanṭā—the most important shrine in al-Aḥmadiyya—was in the hands of the al-Shinnāwī family. The authority of the *shaykh* of al-Qādiriyya, which was inherited by the heads of al-Jīzī family, was also very limited. While there were numerous *tekkes* inhabited by the members of al-Qādiriyya in Egypt, many of them were outside the supervision of this *shaykh* and run by their own leaders. As for al-Khalwatiyya and al-Shādhiliyya, there were no *shaykhs* who could represent the *ṭarīqa* even nominally. Al-Khalwatiyya was a collective of small groups that comprised individual *shaykhs* and their direct disciples, and there was no supreme authority that could unite these groups. For example, the biography written by the direct disciples of Aḥmad al-Sāwī, a Khalwatī *shaykh*, does not reveal any indications of a substantial relationship or fellowship sentiment among the brothers (*ikhwān*) beyond the relationship they had with their master.⁵⁾

In sum, the organizational aspects of the *ṭarīqas* until the beginning of the nineteenth century—that is, until the end of the Ottoman society in Egypt—can be understood as follows: in general, the *ṭarīqa* was not a single, unified organization but a collective of small groups or families. Each group/family, while sharing a common teaching or, more likely, just bearing a common name, stood independently under the control of its own *shaykh*, where there were no organizations or orientations to unite them. It appears that contemporary Sufis were more interested in the succession and manifold of their teaching (*ṭarīqa*) than in the continuation of their groups (*jamā'a*).

3. Institutionalization of the *Ṭarīqas*

3.1 *Ṭarīqas under the Authority of the Shaykh al-Bakrī*

In 1812, Muḥammad 'Alī, the governor of Egypt, issued a decree declaring the jurisdiction of the *shaykh* of the al-Bakrī family (*Shaykh al-Bakrī*), one of the notable Sharifian families in Egypt, over the *ṭarīqas* in Egypt. *Shaykh al-Bakrī* was authorized to supervise the activities of the *ṭarīqas* under his jurisdiction and to intervene in their affairs. By virtue of this decree, an institution for the *ṭarīqas* was introduced in Egypt for the first time, and the state's control over Sufi groups was initiated [De

5) Biography of Aḥmad al-Sāwī hardly indicates that there existed any substantial relationship between Aḥmad al-Sāwī and other Khalwatī *shaykhs*.

Jong 1978: 20-95]. In 1847, an agreement (*ṣakk*) was reached between the *shaykh al-Bakrī* and the *shaykh al-Azhar*, in which it was confirmed that the affairs related to the *ṭarīqas* should be under the jurisdiction of the *shaykh al-Bakrī* and that the *shaykh al-Azhar* would not interfere in such matters. This agreement must have reflected the ruler's desire to undermine the resources of al-Azhar, which was growing increasingly powerful from the latter half of the eighteenth century. Since many Ulama of al-Azhar were members of the *ṭarīqas*, this institution deprived al-Azhar of Sufi resources. However, the actual effectiveness of this agreement was unknown.

Participation in this institution, or more accurately, acceptance of the jurisdiction of the *shaykh al-Bakrī*, was in fact more voluntary than compulsory. As a consequence, the *ṭarīqas* that did not benefit from this institution or those that were active in areas unaffected by the authority of the *shaykh al-Bakrī* remained independent. Although the institution secured the authority inherited among the successive *shaykhs* within the al-Bakrī family, its actual effectiveness was largely dependent on each *shaykh*'s abilities.

3.2 A New Logic in the Sufi Organization

First, I would like to examine the reasons for introducing an institution of this type. What were its benefits for the state and the *ṭarīqas*? For the state, the institution could serve as a useful tool for the control of the populace.

First, this institutionalization can be understood as a part of the state's centralizing policy. The *shaykh al-Bakrī* of the time, himself residing in Cairo, placed his agents (*wakīl al-mashyakha*) all over Egypt. These agents acted as intermediaries between the *shaykh* and the *ṭarīqas* in the regions. By placing a supreme authority in the center and keeping its agents in the regions, the state attempted to reinforce its control over the populace extending to all corners of its territory.

Additionally, the institutionalization served the purposes of taxation; as some *ṭarīqas* contained groups of people who were not organized in the guilds, the state could order the *shaykhs* of these *ṭarīqas* to collect tax from these groups through the institution. For example, Muḥammad 'Alī assigned Muḥammad Yāsīn, who was in the position of the Leader of the Merchants (*shāhbandar al-tujjār*), to the *shaykh* of al-Rifā'iyya in order to collect tax from snake charmers, jugglers, and acrobats, many of whom were members of al-Rifā'iyya and were not organized into any guilds [De Jong 1978: 37].

In addition, a central authority of this type provided certain benefits to the *shaykhs* of the *ṭarīqas*. Nominal as it might have been, *mashyakha al-ṭarīqa* was an attractive position that was accompanied by a certain authority over its members and a measure of property such as *zāwīyas* and shrines. Consequently, as I stated at the beginning, the question of the succession to *mashyakha* has

been a frequent cause of conflicts at least among the candidates. By associating themselves with the *shaykh al-Bakrī*, those *shaykhs* in position could maintain their authority and their property. Since the *shaykh al-Bakrī*, along with his rival the *shaykh al-Sādāt*, had long been an influential figure among the Sufis and Ulama in Egypt, frequently acting as a mediator when conflicts arose among them, it was natural for him to be chosen as the supreme authority over the Sufis. In some ways, this central authority functioned to protect the vested interests of those existing *shaykhs*.

Regardless of the benefits that both sides may have enjoyed, the institutionalization brought about a drastic change in the form of the *ṭarīqas*.

The institution for the *ṭarīqas*, by its nature, required supreme authority in each *ṭarīqa*. In order to ensure the proper functioning of this institution, each *ṭarīqa* was represented by only one *shaykh*—*shaykh al-ṭarīqa*—who was not merely a nominal leader but was now responsible for “his” *ṭarīqa* and was authorized to manage all the affairs therein. As a result, the autonomy enjoyed by each group within the *ṭarīqa* until then was considerably restricted. The leaders of these subgroups, who were now ranked as *khalīfas* of the *ṭarīqa*, had to choose from the following options: accepting the control of *shaykh al-ṭarīqa*, retaining his independence, if possible, outside the jurisdiction of *shaykh al-ṭarīqa*, or leaving the existing *ṭarīqa* to establish his own *ṭarīqas*.

In fact, we observe an explosion of emergent *ṭarīqas* in the nineteenth century. Many of the subgroups that were known as “*jamā’a*,” “*ṭā’ifa*,” or “*bayt*”—but never “*ṭarīqa*”—began claiming that they were independent “*ṭarīqas*.” For example, the houses (*buyūt*) of al-Aḥmadiyya came to be recognized as its sub-*ṭarīqas* (*furū’*). As mentioned earlier, al-Afīfiyya and al-Sammāniyya, which were known as *jamā’a* by al-Jabartī, came to be known as independent *ṭarīqas* during this period.

This change in the form of *ṭarīqas* can be explained as the introduction of a new logic in the Sufi organization; in other words, a *ṭarīqa* has to be an organization headed by a single *shaykh*. While the basis of the organization is its teaching—specific rituals and genealogy—the continuity of the teaching can be achieved by the continuity of the organization. Here, we can recognize the present and generally accepted understanding that “*ṭarīqa*” means “Sufi Organization” or “Sufi Order.” Now, one *ṭarīqa* cannot contain several subgroups and it must be a unified organization; moreover, the divisions of the organization were understood as the divisions of the *ṭarīqa* itself and vice versa.

This process of the transformation of the *ṭarīqa* into an organization can be traced, albeit roughly, by paying attention to the changes in the meaning of the word “*ṭarīqa*” in contemporary sources.

As we have seen, the word “*ṭarīqa*” itself did not represent the actual Sufi groups in the chronicle of al-Jabartī. Indeed, even in the decree issued in 1812, this distinction was observed; while we

cannot find the word “*ṭarīqa*” in the text at all, the expression “the groups of the Sufis (*ṭawā’if al-fuqarā’ al-ṣūfiyya*)” was used [Bakrī 1905: 377]. In the agreement between the *shaykh al-Bakrī* and the *shaykh al-Azhar*, issued in 1847, the expression “*shaykhs of the ṭarīqas (mashāyikh al-ṭuruq)*” appears [Bakrī 1905: 43]; however, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not “*ṭuruq*” (pl. of *ṭarīqa*) in this context signifies the actual Sufi group. In ‘Alī Mubārak’s geography published in 1886-88, the word “*ṭarīqa (al-ṭarīqa al-ṣūfiyya)*” clearly signifies substantial Sufi groups [Mubārak 1886-1888: 129-130]. Moreover, the title of “the supreme *shaykh* over the *shaykhs* of the *ṭarīqas (shaykh mashāyikh al-ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya)*,” which was initially held by the *shaykh al-Bakrī* and subsequently by the chairperson of the Sufi Council, was said to appear for the first time in the 1880s [De Jong 1978: 124]. It appears that in the 1880s at the latest, the word “*ṭarīqa*” came to signify both “the Sufi Way” and “Sufi group.”

4. The Making of “Sufi Orders” in Egypt

4.1 Regulations for the *Ṭarīqas*

Eventually, the institution was reborn with the reform initiated from 1895 by Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Bakrī (1870-1932), the *shaykh al-Bakrī* of the time.

In 1895, the Regulations for the *Ṭarīqas (lā’iḥa al-ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya)* were issued as a Khedival decree. By virtue of this decree, an administrative body was created in the form of a Sufi Council (*majlis al-ṣūfī*) consisting of the *shaykhs* of the major *ṭarīqas* and with “the supreme *shaykh* over the *shaykhs* of the *ṭarīqas*” as the chairperson.⁶⁾ In 1905, the Internal Regulations for the *Ṭarīqas (al-lā’iḥa al-dākhiliyya li’l-ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya)* were issued. These regulations provided guidelines for the organization and the activities of the *ṭarīqas*; they also elucidated the statuses of the *shaykhs* and *khalīfas*.

This reform must have had a great impact on the various aspects of the Egyptian *ṭarīqas*. Here, we can point out that the new logic in the Sufi organization was stipulated in these regulations. For example, in the second section of the Internal Regulations, the status of the *shaykh al-ṭarīqa* is stipulated as follows⁷⁾:

Article 2 One person cannot be appointed as the *shaykh* of two *ṭarīqas*.

Article 3 Each *shaykh* of a *ṭarīqa* is independent of the other. Every *shaykh* is associated with

6) In principle, the office of “the supreme *shaykh* over the *shaykhs* of the *ṭarīqas*” was no longer held exclusively by the *shaykh al-Bakrī* but would be appointed by the Khedive; in fact, the *shaykh al-Bakrī* held this office until 1946.

7) My primary reference for these regulations is the text translated in English in [De Jong 1978: 201-214].

his own *ṭarīqa*. No *shaykh* is subordinate to another, and there must be only one *shaykh* in a single *ṭarīqa*.

Article 11 The chiefs of the branches of the *ṭarīqas* in rural districts should not be addressed as “*shaykhs*” of *al-ṭarīqa* but exclusively as “*nā’ibs*.”

The very fact that these regulations were stipulated proves that the new logic was not fully established in the Egyptian *ṭarīqas* at that time. However, at present, this logic has become a law that must be adhered to by all the *ṭarīqas*.

4.2 Sufi Organization

These regulations were not only provided but thoroughly implemented under the more rationalized administration.

The formation of the *ṭarīqa* organization had already been initiated in the process of institutionalization; the basic structure of the organization was arranged in the mid-nineteenth century and has not undergone major changes to date [Berger 1970: 68-69; De Jong 1978: 47-50].

A notable feature of the *ṭarīqa* organization was the incorporation of two new offices—*nā’ib* and *naqīb*—into its structure; until then, members were ranked across four positions—*shaykh*, *khalīfa*, *murīd*, and *muḥibb*—according to their spiritual attainment. *Nā’ib* and *naqīb*, chosen from among *khalīfas*, were functions rather than spiritual grades, and they played crucial roles in the management of the organization.

Nā’ib was a chief of a branch who, acting as the *shaykh*’s agent, managed affairs in his branch. Beneath the *nā’ib*, were the *naqībs*, who handled more subtle matters.⁸⁾ Although *nā’ibs* and *naqībs* were chosen by the *shaykh*, they had to receive their official appointment by the Sufi Council.

Shaykhs and *nā’ibs* were not always on good terms. For example, a memorandum issued in 1943 from the Sufi Council reveals that friction between *shaykhs* and *nā’ibs* was increasing, and the Council had received a number of petitions from both sides.⁹⁾ As will be mentioned in the next section, some *nā’ibs* even claimed independence from their *shaykhs*.

With regard to the *mashyakha*, it was stipulated in the internal regulations (sec. 2 art. 6) that the eldest son should succeed to the office. However, the appointment of new *shaykhs* required approval from the Council.

8) For example, four *naqībs* were assigned under each *nā’ib* in Alexandria in 1946. Cf. Egyptian National Archives, Cairo, al-‘Ābidīn records (Maḥfaza al-‘Ābidīn, abbreviated hereafter as MA) 539, 12 August 1946, “List of *Nā’ibs* and *Naqībs* of the *Ṭarīqas* in Alexandria.”

9) MA539, 24 April 1943, “A Memorandum from the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas* to *Shaykhs* of *Ṭarīqas*.”

Although a *shaykh* was in charge of both spiritual guidance and the management of the organization, several *shaykhs* actually entrusted the management to their deputies (*wakīls*). The memorandum issued in 1943 pointed out the increase of this practice and stipulated that the appointment of *wakīls* was permitted only in exceptional cases such as the *shaykh*'s illness and only with permission from the Council.¹⁰⁾

With regard to the activities of the *ṭarīqas*, agents (*wakīl al-mashyakha*) of the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas*, placed throughout the country, played crucial roles. Typically, these agents were local notables chosen from among the members of *ṭarīqas*, *sharīfs*, or custodians of the shrines.¹¹⁾ As the regulations stipulated conditions for their activities, it was these agents who actually directed them. For example, when the birthday of King Fārūq I was to be celebrated on February 11, 1943, the Council notified each agent on the details of arranging the celebration and directing the *ṭarīqas* on the day.¹²⁾

It is concluded here that as a result of the state's thorough intervention as illustrated above, the new logic in the Sufi organization was fully established in the Egyptian *ṭarīqas*, transforming them into a single unified organization in mid-twentieth century at the latest.

4.3 A Conflict over the Independence of al-Ḥabībiyya from al-Rifā'iyya

Despite the fact that this new logic was stipulated and implemented by the state, which must have aimed at the stability and continuity of the *ṭarīqas*, the divisions within the *ṭarīqas* continued.

In fact, immediately following the issuance of the Internal Regulations in 1905, a number of *khalīfas* appealed to the Sufi Council, claiming that they should be appointed as the *shaykhs* of their independent *ṭarīqas*.¹³⁾

In most cases, these *khalīfas* finally attained independence from their previous *shaykhs*. However, this was not always easily achieved. Serious conflicts frequently occurred between the *khalīfas* and their *shaykhs*, and the decisions made by the Sufi Council did not always satisfy both sides.

Here, I would like to analyze a case of one such conflict—the conflict over the independence of al-Ḥabībiyya from al-Rifā'iyya. This conflict arose when Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī, the *nā'ib* of al-Rifā'iyya, appealed to the Sufi Council, claiming that he should be appointed as the

10) MA539, 24 April 1943, "A Memorandum from the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas* to *Shaykhs* of *Ṭarīqas*."

11) On the conditions for the appointment of *wakīls* see the Internal Regulations for the *Ṭarīqas*, section 3, article 1 & 2 [De Jong 1978: 210-211].

12) MA539, 7 February 1943, "A Notification from the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas* to the *Wakīls*."

13) For example, the following *ṭarīqas* obtained their independence during this period: al-Ḥāmidīyya from al-Qāwuqajīyya, al-Mughāziyya from al-Sibā'iyya, and al-Shahāwīyya from al-Burhāmiyya [De Jong 1978: 175-180].

shaykh of *ṭarīqa* al-Ḥabībīyya.¹⁴⁾

The following is the story of this conflict.

In 1905, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī requested the Sufi Council to appoint him as the *shaykh* of al-Ḥabībīyya; however, his request was immediately rejected. In the same year, he turned to the National Court of Appeal in Cairo (Maḥkama al-Isti’nāf Miṣr al-Ahliyya),¹⁵⁾ but his claim was dismissed. However, in 1911, when the chairperson of the Sufi Council was replaced, the independence of al-Ḥabībīyya was accepted. This time, however, the Ministry of Interior opposed this decision and the case was taken to the court again. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī’s claim was not accepted, and he was ordered to continue as the *nā’ib* of al-Rifā’iyya. However, in 1925, the Ministry of Interior suddenly accepted his claim and al-Ḥabībīyya finally obtained independence. This was achieved due to a personal relationship between Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī and Muḥammad Ḥilmī ‘Īsā, who was appointed as the Minister of Interior in 1924; further, both Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī and Muḥammad Ḥilmī ‘Īsā belonged to the same political party (*Ḥizb al-Ittiḥād*).

This raises the following question: Why did Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī want to claim his independence from al-Rifā’iyya and on what basis did he justify this claim?

It is difficult to identify his precise reason for claiming independence from al-Rifā’iyya. However, there are some indications that already in the 1880s, al-Ḥabībīyya was virtually recognized as an independent *ṭarīqa* [Mubārak 1886-1888: 17]. Officially, however, it was ranked as a house (*bayt*) of al-Rifā’iyya, and the head of al-Ḥabībīyya—Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī—was given the title of *nā’ib*.¹⁶⁾ Moreover, al-Rifā’iyya has never permitted the existence of sub-*ṭarīqas* till date [*Al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* 2001: 49]. I speculate that the head of al-Ḥabībīyya had long been yearning for its official independence from al-Rifā’iyya.

The justification of his claim can be found in his petition to the Court in 1905.

Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī claimed that *ṭarīqa* al-Ḥabībīyya was an independent *ṭarīqa*. Its founder was his grandfather, the late Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Ḥabībī, whose shrine is located on al-Sayyida Zaynab street in Cairo. He was initiated into *ṭarīqa(s)* by *shaykhs* who belonged to al-

14) For this incident, my primary reference is the trial records in MA539, which comprised 13 documents. See also [De Jong 1983: 187-188].

15) National Courts were established in 1883 to exclusively treat the cases that involved Egyptians; its codes were based on those of the Mixed Courts established in 1875 [Hoyle 1991: 186].

16) This was proven in five documentary evidences submitted to the courts by the *shaykh* al-Rifā’iyya. Cf. MA539, 21 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1300, 1304, 10 Rabi’ al-Ākhar 1305, 19 Rajab 1305, n.d.

Aḥmadiyya, al-Shādhiliyya, al-Khalwatiyya, al-Naqshbandiyya, and al-Rifā'iyya. He taught all these *ṭarīqas* to his disciples until his death. He (Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī) continued (his claim) that this *ṭarīqa* had its specific form of prayers and rituals (*ṣalawāt*, *aḥzāb*, and *awrād*). Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Ḥabībī had appointed the late Muḥammad al-Ḥabībī, his (the claimant's) father, as the successor of this *ṭarīqa*.¹⁷⁾

In sum, his claim was based on the fact that his grandfather, the founder of al-Ḥabībīyya, had received several *ṭarīqas* other than al-Rifā'iyya, which Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī had taken over from his father (Muḥammad al-Ḥabībī) and also on the fact that its prayers and rituals were different from those of al-Rifā'iyya.

This claim appears to be reasonable in view of the new logic in the Sufi organization: The base of an organization is its teaching. Since al-Ḥabībīyya differs from al-Rifā'iyya in its teachings—prayers, rituals, and genealogy—it should also differ from al-Rifā'iyya in its organization.

If this is the case, then why was the claim repeatedly rejected by the authority?

The answer lies in the logic itself. The grounds on which he claimed independence were commonalities shared by all *ṭarīqas* in Egypt. It has been a common practice to initiate one person into several *ṭarīqas*, and it is not difficult to find a prominent *shaykh* who would have introduced new rituals and composed his original prayer manuals in a *ṭarīqa*. Thus, his claim, if accepted, could also lead to the division of other *ṭarīqas* in Egypt.

In fact, in his report on the incident in 1905, the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas* expressed his fear that if he had accepted the independence of al-Ḥabībīyya, it would have served as a precedent for other ambitious *khalīfas* in justifying their demand for independence, and this would have triggered the division of other *ṭarīqas* in Egypt.¹⁸⁾ The same fear was shared by the Ministry of Interior. In 1911, when the new chairperson of the Sufi Council accepted al-Ḥabībīyya's independence, the Ministry was strongly opposed to his decision.

Eventually, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥabībī obtained his independence through a personal connection with the then Minister of Interior; this implies that the Sufi Council could not solve the problem.

The conflict over the independence of al-Ḥabībīyya presents an interesting case; his claim, which was grounded in the new logic of the Sufi organization, led to an unfavorable situation for the state. Ironically, the new logic in the Sufi organization, which was introduced and established through

17) MA539, 24 February 1906, "The Conclusion of the Trial at the National Courts of Appeal in Cairo."

18) MA539, 30 January 1907, "Report from the Supreme *Shaykh* over the *Shaykhs* of the *Ṭarīqas* to the Palace."

the institutionalization initiated by the state, itself served as the grounds for the divisions within the *ṭarīqas* in the twentieth century.

5. Conclusion

The case of al-Ḥabībīyya was merely one of many such conflicts. Therefore, I do not believe it is possible to specify all the factors responsible for the increase in the divisions within the *ṭarīqas* during this period.

However, at least one factor can be pointed out: the new logic in the Sufi organization that was introduced in the nineteenth century provided grounds for justifying the claims of those *khalīfas* who wanted to be *shaykhs* of their own *ṭarīqas*. In other words, the state's very endeavor to "modernize" the *ṭarīqa* organization and stabilize it within the Egyptian society served on the contrary to create instability.

This irony can be explained in part by reviewing the evolution of the organizational aspect of the *ṭarīqa* as illustrated in this paper. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a *ṭarīqa* was not an organization but a teaching, it could be maintained as long as a single person succeeded to its teaching. However, with the introduction of the new logic in the Sufi organization by its institutionalization, a *ṭarīqa* no longer could be maintained without its organization; now the continuity of its teachings could be achieved only by the continuity of its organization. At this stage, the weakness of the Sufi organization¹⁹⁾ came to be the critical feature that could endanger the stability or, in the worst case scenario, very the existence of the *ṭarīqa* itself.

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19) Since the unity of the Sufi organization is, in most cases, fundamentally maintained by the *shaykh*'s charisma, it can easily disintegrate with the emergence of competitors [Gilsenan 1967].

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